INTERVIEW WITH MARTIN LYNCH
by ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL

22nd February 1898

Mr Lynch, now nearly 76 years of age, came to Illawarra in March 1827 with his step-father's family, the latter's name being Mr Dundon.

Came from Appin locality via the now old track down the Bulli Mountain. Said old track leaving the present Bulli Pass near the "Elbow", and passing down close to where Bulli Colliery now is.

Family etc etc brought in horse cart, which had to be lowered down parts of the mountain backwards by ropes. Had to camp whole night about half way down the mountain, in the burned-out bottom of a standing Turpentine or Gum Tree - not certain which kind. Inclosure within butt of tree so spacious that a horse with a man on could easily turn round inside of it. Whole family camped within the tree all night. The tree stood long after and was known as "Government House" (evidently the tree mentioned by Dr Lang in his History of N.S.W. A.C)

Settled at once at "Towal Creek" (the blackfellow name of Cabbage Tree Creek), on part of Balgownie Estate - then owned by Mr William Wilson, who had purchased it from Mr Buckland of Narrellan, to whom it was granted by the Government.

Mr Dundon and family started farming near where Fairy Meadow Post Office now stands, East side of the main road.

Man named Peter Lillis soon settled similarly on the north side of creek. A son of Lillis', a youth or young man also named Peter, died there shortly after and was buried on the farm.

This, Mr Lynch avers, was the first death of a European in Illawarra. There was no burial ground, and neither clergyman nor church of any kind in the district - hence the young fellow was buried on his father's clearing lease, about half-way between Cabbage Tree Creek and Para Meadow railway. His grave lay slightly east of the present main road.

The next place where burials made was in front of the old Court House or Custom House and Brighton Hotel - several bodies interred there.

Religion

Reverend Mr Reddall(C.E.) of Campbelltown and Father Therry, some time after Lynch's arrival, visited Wollongong about quarterly.

Reverend Mr Tait, first Presbyterian clergyman in the district, purchased an allotment from Mr C. T. Smith on the south-west corner of Church and Smith Street, and built the cottage still there, and now occupied by Mr D. Griffin Senr. Mr Tait stayed ten years.

Rev. Meares first C.E. Parson - resided in Corrimal Street about midway between Market and Smith Streets, on the east side.

Father Rigney first priest - resided where R.C. Presbytery still is - the same building as now, less more recent enlargements and improvements.

Aboriginal name of Cedar "Currumbring"
Fairy Meadow and Main Road

The real Fairy Meadow was a naturally clear patch of land east and west of the present main road near the junction with the Mr Ousley road - mostly northwest and northeast of there.

The first roadway, or thoroughfare in that direction, passed through this meadow; northward - east of the Council Chambers and across the creek below the main road; southward - passed Lysaght's Red House, through Arthur Robinson's, then Smith's, and joining the present route between Gipps Road and the hospital.

Fearful Tragedy at Fairy Meadow.

Early in Mr Lynch's experience three bushrangers - he thought from the Appin direction - haunted the district, their main hiding place being in a piece of dense bush standing between the Council Chamber and Townsend's and winding by Fairy Creek.

Their names were Underwood, McLaughlin and York. They continued in the district two or three years. The Police, mounted or otherwise, although continually looking for them, could not capture them.

Sawyers and settlers, mainly on account of fearing reprisals from them, gave them food and clothing now and then. They (the bushrangers) also shot and killed a cow or bullock occasionally, from the herds in the district.

The terrible end of one of them came about thus:- McLaughlin and York started from the camp (near the back of Townsends) one day to shoot a steer, in the Bellambi direction - having forgotten to take bullets with them, McLaughlin returned for some, and coming unexpectedly on Underwood found him writing in a kind of note book. McLaughlin could not read but suspected unfaithfulness on the part of Underwood toward his companions on account of the book, which appears to have been seen for the first time. He accordingly returned to York and informed him of what he had seen Underwood doing. Both decided not to look for the steer that day but to go back to camp at once. They did so at once and demanded from Underwood what he had been writing.

He denied having written anything, or being seen doing so. Under pain of instant death, he was made to produce the book, in which York (who could read and write) found that the day and date of every depredation they had committed was entered, and as to how each raid was carried out.

This was taken for granted as being prepared for evidence to be given against them (McLaughlin and York) by Underwood who they concluded intended to give "Kings Evidence" against them.

They ordered him at once to fall on his knees and prepare for death in a few moments - both standing over him with loaded muskets. He kneeled down accordingly, begging for his life to be spared, but to no avail.

McLaughlin suspected that York was hesitating at taking part in the dreadful deed. Both would fire simultaneously at Underwood's head.

McLaughlin, by way of strategem to test York's fidelity in the gruesome situation, fired through Underwood's thigh instead of his head - pretending that his gun slipped. He reloaded at once remarking "I missed him then, but I will do him this time". Instead of pointing the gun again at Underwood he did so at York's heart, saying "If you don't shoot him dead, I will put this bullet through your heart". York then at once, and under cover
of McLaughlin's musket, shot Underwood dead through the head.

They then burned the body in the hollow log of a big tree, and he (Lynch) had frequently seen particles of the bones in the position of the fire, even many years afterwards. The tragedy was perpetuated near where the road cutting saw mill now stands.

After a time the two remaining men separated - York was hung for some depredation committed in some other part of the country. McLaughlin was reprieved on some account and settled at Fairy Meadow where Mr Bate resided afterwards. He lived there several years - was said to have disturbed nights rest occasionilly and died of a loathsome disease.

The story of the terrible tragedy was related by McLaughlin, and possibly also by York before his execution.

Flogging

The flogging place was immediately at the rear of the old Court House (old Police Station now).

The men were flogged in the forenoon and afternoon as a rule, being tied up to a triangle. The flogger wielded his thong lustily on the bare backs or buttocks of the men (according to sentence).

The "cat" usually was six tailed, but nine tailed in instances of very numerous lashes to be given. On some cases the men flogged would clench their teeth, and not utter a sound, but in others painful shrieks were uttered.

He (Mr Lynch) when attending school as a lad, frequently passed through the enclosure where the flogging was being carried out and watched the inflictions - and in the course of his process blood could readily be seen squirted about from the effects of the lashing. After a few strokes the flogger would draw the cat tails through his fingers to squeeze off the skin and flesh which he would cast away, and resume his ghastly work, until completed.

This Mr Lynch gave from his personal observations, as above.

Stocks

Stocks existed in the Market Square, and many a time he saw men confined in them - their legs held fast in openings in two heavy pieces of wood drawn together. Sentences to the stocks usually were not for long, and only for minor offences.

Treadmill

All persons sentenced in the district to punishment on the treadmill were sent to Parramatta to undergo such penalty.

Burke the Bushranger

Remember seeing Burke the Bushranger brought to Wollongong from Bulli by the Police. In the course of coming along, Burke would take a tree or plant leaf in his mouth, and make musical sounds with it almost equal to tunes. The reputed character of Burke, as heard by Mr Lynch, was that he would insist on a portion of any spoil that came within his way, but would not take the whole, unless resistance was given him. (Mr Lynch has many recollections of Burke at Appin).
Schools

The school attended by Mr Lynch when he used to see the convicts flogged was a Roman Catholic one, conducted where the Presbytery now stands. There were not many pupils.

A Church of England school was conducted at that time by a Mr John Davies in a large slab structure situated on the neck of land between Smith Street, Harbour Street and Market Square. The building was the property of Mr C. T. Smith. It had been erected and used by him for a barn, but after he removed his residence from that locality (where he first resided) the barn was used for a school and divine services.

Public Worship

The first place where public worship was conducted in Illawarra was in a structure erected for a barn by Mr C. T. Smith - it was situated on the peninsula-shaped piece of land between Smith Street east, Harbour Street and Market Square - as now exists. It was a large building erected of hardwood slabs. Clergymen of all denominations, including R.C., used to conduct service there on their respective visits to the district from Campbelltown or Sydney.

Most of the few inhabitants about attended all the services, which were not held more than about quarterly for some years. A feature of the services, more especially those connected with the Church of England, was that the convicts from the stockade were marshalled to the barn to attend divine worship. The men in those instances were under the command of the officers having charge of them as "Government Men". The attention paid to the sermons or the services as a whole were not marked for reverence. He (Mr Lynch) had repeatedly seen some of the men at the rear of the building "gaffing" with pennies or other coins, while the clergymen, be he priest or parson, was preaching and praying.

It was in this barn, however, that the Gospel was first preached in Illawarra, and that the first school was conducted by Mr John Davies. (If ever a Cathedral should be erected in Illawarra the said spot should thence be the site of it, in National recognition of its being a sacred spot where the glad tidings of the Redeemer were first publicly preached under the Illawarra Ranges, and where the first lessons in Education were taught and learned in this same expanse of new country.

First Store in Illawarra

The first in Illawarra was crudely constructed slab structure situated on the east side of Harbour Street - on the highest ground between the Convent and the streets running towards the sea from slightly south of the junction of Smith and Harbour Streets.

The store was started and carried on several years by a Mr William Wilson (who put a cabbage bridge over "Towal" Creek, Fairy Meadow, from which bridge the term "Cabbage Tree" or Cabbage Tree Creek" originated).

Mr Wilson had several brothers in the district, and he or one of his brothers opened the first store at Kiama about 1840 - such store being on the site now (1898) occupied by Mr Dymock's sale yards, immediately southward of Brighton Hotel - the name of the first Hotel erected on that spot in the early
fifties was the Steam Packet Hotel - opened and kept for several years by Mr George Adams, subsequently of Tattersall’s Hotel, Sydney, and famous as a "consultation" promoter.

Aborigines

Mr Lynch in his early boyhood - about 1830 - witnessed a battle at Fairy Meadow, between the Illawarra blacks and the Bong Bong blacks, over something in the lady line.

The battle took place in a naturally clear spot - the real Fairy Meadow - situated immediately on the north and east of what is now the junction of the Main road and Mt Ousley Road. Mr Lynch declares that several hundred men on each side took part in the battle, which consisted of a series of intermittent onslaughts, which extended over three days and nights.

During the continuance of the battle some of the men and women would go abroad hunting for food.

The battle was won by the Illawarra blacks. Many blacks on both sides were killed and more wounded. The killed were buried in the Tea Tree Scrub between the site of the battle and the sea (between two arms of Fairy Creek). The weapons were mostly spears, "nullah nullah’s", and "waddies" of one shape or another.

Mr Lynch states that he never remembered the blacks having actually murdered any white persons in the district, though several were scared by them now and again. He mentioned however that Mr Hicks, subsequently of Bulli, was decoyed into the bush in the Shoalhaven district under the plea of showing him some cedar, and that he narrowly escaped being killed by his false guide or guides. He saved his life by jumping over a precipice, falling on suspended vines and thereby being saved from being smashed in the fall.

12th April 1898

(Continuing his account of the battle between the Blacks, in answer to questions by me - A.C.) Mr Lynch explained that the dead of both parties were buried along the northwest bank of Fairy Creek, east of the North Illawarra Council Chamber. About 70 men were killed in the battle, including both sides, and all the corpses were buried by teh victorious Illawarra tribe.

The graves were dug along the bank of the creek, which was somewhat sandy, the depth of each being about three or four feet. The blankets, tomahawks, "billy" cans and all other articles owned by each deceased were buried with them, some wood also being placed on top of the corpse.

The explanation givn by the survivors was that the wood and other articles would be required by the departed "in another country."

He (Mr Lynch) witnessed the burial of several of the men killed in the battle. That place of burial was not the usual locality for interment by the blacks - the slain in battle only being placed there. The usual burial place in that quarter was in the sandy bush land on the south side of Fairy Creek - now Stuart park - east and west of the Pavilion. The sand banks, near Tom Thumb Lagoon, Bellambi, and Towradgi, were likewise burial places, where many bodies were interred from time to time. He had witnessed nearly twenty blacks buried in the spot near Fairy Creek already mentioned. As a rule they did not desire white people to know where they (the blacks) buried their dead, but after
the district became somewhat settled their burials could not be kept secret.
The blacks carrying out the burials and the deceased’s relatives used to stripe their bodies and heads and necks and limbs with pipeclay, as marks of mourning for the departed.

Regarding the battle, he had witnessed it each of the three days over which it extended - hostilities being suspended at nightfall. His mother and step-father also viewed it each day from the elevated ground between Mr Bate’s brickyard and Mrs Aquila Parsons’s residence.

The Illawarra tribe fought on the north side of the Meadow, and the Bong Bong tribe on the south. Spears were thrown thick and fast between the combatants, and repeatedly he had seen men struck with them on both sides, sometimes causing the man struck to fall mortally wounded, while in some instances the wounded person would struggle to withdraw the spear - not always successfully.

In close quarters "nullah nullahs" and other hand to hand weapons were used furiously in the mortal combat - one of the persons so injured not infrequently having his skull crushed or limbs broken.

The dead were left unburied until the battle was over, after which the victors carried the bodies to the place stated and buried them there as already mentioned.

The cause of the battle was the taking away from the Bong Bong blacks of a young "jin" of their tribe by an Illawarra black designated "Dr Ellis" by the whites. He induced her to leave her tribe with him, and carried her away captive unknown to them, and hence the rupture between the two tribes, resulting in the battle and bloodshed narrated. The captive maid was in the immediate vicinity of the hostilities all the time as were the "jins", the latter carrying about and supplying to the male warriors the deadly weapons and other requirements of the ongoing engagement.

The young jin who was the cause of all the bloodshed did not hide her desire to flee to her own tribe, even while the battle was proceeding, but from doing so she was forcibly prevented, and beaten again and again most brutally, until her head was almost in a state of jelly and was covered with gore - the brutality being inflicted mainly by her captor ("Dr Ellis"). So frightfully was she beaten and battered that his (Mr Lynch’s) mother took compassion on her and took her to her own home and doctored her there for some time until she recovered sufficiently to rejoin her lord and master and his tribe.

The Bong Bong blacks came down the mountain range from their own country, making the descent opposite Dapto, to wage war with the Illawarra tribe, at whose hands they sustained defeat in pitched battle as stated - the survivors returning again by the same route over the mountain to Bong Bong to tell their tales of blood and daring deeds by the way.

The young woman, or "jin", concerning whom the battle took place, remained in Illawarra all the remainder of her life and passed away, as did the whole of her race, from time to time in rapid diminution, unknowing and unknown in an historic sense. Sanguine as was the mortal tribal conflict that had taken place regarding her, and numerous as were the slain that bled or fell in her interest.

Her remains, like those of these sable warriors who died concerning her, were interred in the usual crude grave in Illawarra soil, without a stone or
any other sign to show her last resting place.

(At this point Archibald Campbell’s notes concerning his interview with Martin Lynch end. Archibald Campbell’s often unintelligible notes were transcribed by Miss M McDonald, with minor additions and correction by Michael Organ.
This transcript typed 5-6th July 1986 by M. Organ).

**MARTIN LYNCH**

c1825  By deduction from 1828 Census, Martin Lynch b. to (from details of his second marriage) James Lynch & Mary McLoughin.

1828  1828 Census shows Martin & Betsy Lynch, 3 & 2 respectively, at Appin as the children of Mrs. Dunson by a former marriage. Thomas & Mary Dundon are bracketed together, both 31 & FS, living at Appin.


3/5/1857  Mary Dundon of Fairy Meadow died. (Mary Dundon/Dundos/Dunder/Dundoon/Dudon, etc. was mother of Martin through her first association with James Lynch).

29/4/1879  Martin Lynch, widower, b. Appin, farmer, 49, residence Fig Tree, son of James Lynch & Mary McLoughin m. Cate McNabb, spinster, b. Co. Tyrone, servant, 33, of Fig Tree, daughter of Bernard McNabb, farmer & Margaret Reilly.

9/12/1905  Martin Lynch of Wollongong died leaving Letters of Administration Nos. 36860 Series 4 & 132227.

12/12/1905  Obituary appeared in Illawarra Mercury:

"On Friday night Mr. Martin Lynch, a highly respected resident of the district for 80 years, died at his residence, Fairy Meadow, rather suddenly. The deceased gentleman complained of pains around the heart early in the evening, and retired to rest about 8 o’clock. He had a bad turn at 11.30 p.m., and died within half-an-hour. He was a native of Appin and came to Illawarra when 4 years of age. The late Mr. Lynch was married twice, having sixteen children, 12 of whom survive him. The married daughters are Mrs. E. Gillies, Mrs. H. Rudd (Paddington), Mrs. J. Murphy, Mrs. Nunan (Sydney), Mrs. Ahlburg, Mrs. B. Wall. Eldest son, Mr. James Lynch, is licensee of the Auburn Hotel. The funeral took place on Sunday afternoon, and was largely attended. Rev. Father Walsh, P.P., officiated at the grave."